

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An applicator comprising:  
a handle member;  
a retainer secured to the handle member;  
an applicator ball rotatably mounted in the retainer; and  
at least one elastically-deformable link element connecting the retainer to the handle member so that the retainer is moveable relative to the handle member,  
wherein the handle member is configured to close a receptacle.
2. The applicator of claim 1, wherein the handle member has an axis and the link element is configured to enable the retainer to move along the axis at least during application.
3. The applicator of claim 1, wherein the link element comprises a foam.
4. The applicator of claim 1, wherein the link element comprises a spring.
5. The applicator of claim 1, wherein the spring comprises a helical spring.
6. The applicator of claim 1, wherein the handle member comprises:  
a cap; and  
an insert fixed in the cap, wherein the link element is secured to the insert.
7. The applicator of claim 6, wherein the insert comprises a skirt whereby the link element is secured to the insert.
8. The applicator of claim 1, wherein the handle member has a sealing lip for pressing against a neck of a receptacle.
9. The applicator of claim 1, wherein the retainer is made of a rigid plastics material.
10. The applicator of claim 1, wherein the retainer comprises a shape forming a portion of a sphere matching the shape of the ball.
11. The applicator of claim 1, wherein the link element is not integral with the retainer.
12. The applicator of claim 1, wherein the handle member is configured to close a receptacle in a leaktight manner.
13. A device, comprising:  
a receptacle for containing a substance; and  
an applicator according to claim 1, the applicator being configured to close the receptacle when the applicator is in place on the receptacle.
14. The device of claim 13, wherein the receptacle comprises a wall forming a seat for the ball.

15. The device of claim 14, wherein the wall has at least one annular portion against which the ball presses when the applicator is in place on the receptacle.
16. The device of claim 14, wherein the wall comprises at least one orifice that enables a substance contained in the receptacle to pass to the ball.
17. The device of claim 16, wherein the wall comprises a setback that co-operates with the ball when the applicator is in place on the receptacle to form a space into which the at least one orifice opens.
18. The device of claim 14, wherein the receptacle comprises:
  - a first portion forming a reservoir suitable for containing a substance; and
  - a second portion assembled to the first portion, the second portion including the wall.
19. The device of claim 13, wherein the link element is compressed when the applicator is in place on the receptacle.
20. The device of claim 13, wherein the handle member has an axis and the link element is configured to enable the retainer to depart from the axis at least during application.
21. The device of claim 14, further comprising a cosmetic substance contained in the receptacle.
22. An applicator comprising:
  - a handle member;
  - a retainer secured to the handle member;
  - an applicator ball rotatably mounted in the retainer; and
  - a foam connecting the handle member to the retainer.
23. An applicator comprising:
  - a handle member having an axis;
  - a retainer secured to the handle member;
  - an applicator ball rotatably mounted in the retainer; and
  - a spring connecting the handle member to the retainer and allowing the retainer to depart from the axis at least during application.
24. The applicator of claim 23, wherein the spring comprises a helical spring.
25. A method of applying a substance using the applicator of claim 1, comprising:
  - providing a substance to the applicator ball;
  - contacting a surface with the applicator ball;

moving at least one of the applicator and the surface relative to the other of the applicator and the surface while contacting the surface with the applicator ball to transfer at least some of the substance from the applicator ball to the surface; and

allowing the retainer to move relative to the handle member during movement of the at least one of the applicator and the surface.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein providing a substance to the applicator ball comprises providing a care product to the applicator ball.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein providing a care product to the applicator ball comprises providing a cosmetic substance to the applicator ball.

28. A method of applying a substance using the applicator of claim 22, comprising:

providing a substance to the applicator ball;

contacting a surface with the applicator ball;

moving at least one of the applicator and the surface relative to the other of the applicator and the surface while contacting the surface with the applicator ball to transfer at least some of the substance from the applicator ball to the surface; and

allowing the retainer to move relative to the handle member during movement of the at least one of the applicator and the surface.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein providing a substance to the applicator ball comprises providing a care product to the applicator ball.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein providing a care product to the applicator ball comprises providing a cosmetic substance to the applicator ball.

31. A method of applying a substance using the applicator of claim 23, comprising:

providing a substance to the applicator ball;

contacting a surface with the applicator ball;

moving at least one of the applicator and the surface relative to the other of the applicator and the surface while contacting the surface with the applicator ball to transfer at least some of the substance from the applicator ball to the surface; and

allowing the retainer to move relative to the handle member during movement of the at least one of the applicator and the surface.

32. The method of claim 31, wherein providing a substance to the applicator ball comprises providing a care product to the applicator ball.

33. The method of claim 32, wherein providing a care product to the applicator ball comprises providing a cosmetic substance to the applicator ball.